

Landfills are as outdated as outhouses

To the Editor;

The Albany Landfill should not be permitted to expand.

The McKownville Improvement Association, of which I am president, strongly objects to the landfill operations. Its expansion would exacerbate the problems we have had with the Albany landfill operation.

Firstly, it has been a smelly operation. It stinks up our neighborhood. We have had numerous public meetings about the stink and many, many complaints.

The stink is not only obnoxious but many of our 900-plus households are convinced that it masks a health risk and is therefore dangerous. The "Big Stink" is presumed to carry dangerous air pollution into our homes and gardens and lives: What is in the gases coming out of the landfill is the often-asked question. We do not know, but our fears make our days and nights uneasy.

Secondly, the landfill interferes with our use of the Pine Bush as a recreational site. Guilderland and the nearby suburbs of Colonie and Bethlehem do not have very many publicly-owned wilderness recreational sites available. As private land becomes developed, even the privately-owned wilderness sites are becoming scarce.

The Pine Bush is more than our "wilderness Central Park" — it is a unique resource that the association fought hard to protect against the development of Crossgates and other developers. It is not just another piece of land — it is special to us and to maintaining a diverse habitat for

our children and our neighbors, near and far.

Thirdly, authorization of an expansion only delays what should have happened years ago — the use of a better technology to provide for waste disposal. It is as if we are debating whether to preclude the continuation of outhouses in Albany in 2007 rather than forcing government to collect the fees and taxes necessary to provide a modern sanitary sewer system.

Such a discussion of outhouses would seem ludicrous today — but then so does this discussion. Landfills are as outmoded as outhouses.

A modern, large city cannot have either. An alternative technology is overdue.

It is time to force the city of Albany to step into the 21st Century and do what needs to be done — stop the landfill and dispose of wastes properly. A delay is an excuse, not a solution.

Fourthly, the residents of McKownville look forward to having a connected set of paths through McKownville, the city of Albany, and through the Pine Bush and the nearby lake area all the way over to the Mohawk and the Erie Canal and beyond.

The town of Guilderland is busy providing a McKownville Reservoir Park near Stuyvesant Plaza which will have paths which we hope to connect up to the Pine Bush. Such paths go beyond the provision of recreation sites — they mark out the connections we all have to each other.

They will define our larger community for all of us. They are like mountain trails — they

make the mountains part of everyday life and serve to define part of that life. And the trail system, of which the Pine Bush is an important part, does likewise for the people of the region. Mountains without trails — absurd you might say — so why should we be forced not to have trails though our wilderness?

We need the Pine Bush to keep us grounded in our region and our neighborhood. The Albany landfill interferes with this — not just spatially but by creating a fear about what this operation does to us as we hike near it.

It is like a mountain lion hiding near a mountain trail — it forecloses the use of the trail to many. It is not what should be — and we are begging the Department of Environmental Conservation to stop the city of Albany from using our precious Pine Bush for this use, when the technology and the money can be commanded to alleviate the problem and improve the lives of the people throughout our region, and especially for the people of McKownville.

I attended and spoke at the meeting at the Polish America Club and I thought that DEC did a great job — it is orderly and courteous — and not all of the public meetings conducted by state agencies that I have attended have been such. Maintaining a courteous atmosphere is terribly important, I think, and DEC did a great job Wednesday night.

Don Reeb
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Improvement Association